

search with avidity for every shadow of a
 proof or probability of an after-existence both in the
 material and immaterial nature of man/ One may wonder
 that a mind which found this life so tedious, should so
 sigh for eternity; but in such matters the human
 temperament is seldom very logical. Gnawed by the worm
 on earth, it speculates hopefully about the worm that
 never dies.

Still, if the letters throw but a glimmer
 on the poet's heart, they reveal very clearly those two
 qualities of Ibis brain which go to make his poetry at rimes so
 astonishing-
 imagination and wit. Even as a child, his
 first favourite poet had been Cowley. And to read these
 letters brings home with fresh force how hardy a plant
 real originality is. Such a mind, read what it may, imitate
 whom it will, imposes as invincibly as a distorting mirror
 its own queer quality on all its reflections. It was a gift
 Sterne had, It belongs in our own day to Mr. E. M.
 Forster—who else but he would behold the United States, for
 example, with the most spontaneously innocent air in the
 world, as a brightly coloured apron tied chastely round
 the buxom waist of the American Continent? So with
 Beddoes.

He too was born with this gift of seeing in
 every square a fifth corner; no doubt he cultivated his
 oddity, finding it succeed; but it always seems a natural part
 of him, as if he had had a mandrake for comforter in die
 cradle and made

it his youthful hobby 'to chat with mummies
in a pyramid,
and breakfast on basilisk's eggs', 'There is
nothing of in-
terest in town', he will write, 'except a pair
of live croco-
diles in St. Martin's Lane.' 'I will sacnfice
my raven to
you', is his answer when Kelsall recoils from
the sinister
menagerie of *Death's Jest-Book*, 'but my
crocky is really
very dear to me/ This is, indeed, one of the
few expres-
sions of affection in his whole
correspondence. Or again:
'Such verses as these and their brethren,
will never be